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VOLUME 1, EDITION 12

On the set

Cromwell native films movie on location in town

See story on page 4

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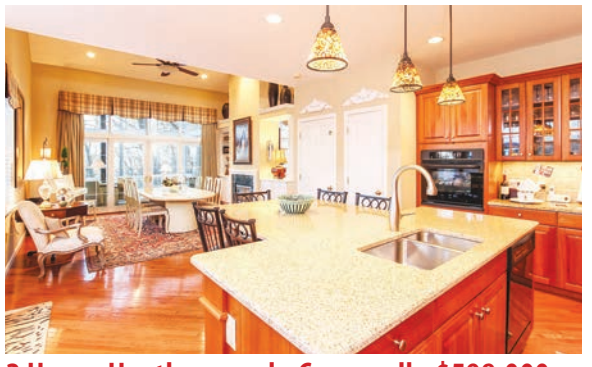

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"You have to accept people as they are and not be judgmental, because you never know what's going on. I tried to do that."

- Ann C. Hale

See story page 8

ON THE COVER

David Gere is a multi-talented actor, producer and stunt man whose film "Pitching Tents" was shot on location in Cromwell.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 4

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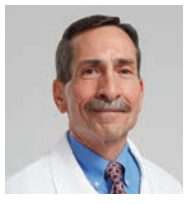

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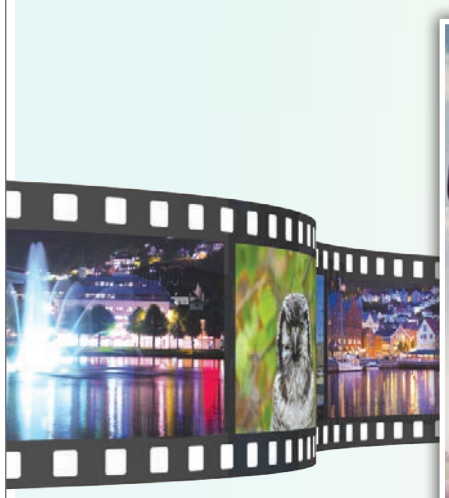

Pitching Tents Official Poster
Photo courtesy of Emerging Entertainment

Producer David Gere with actor Michael Grant on the set of "Pitching Tents" in Cromwell.
Photo by Ryan Sweeney

Lights, camera, action

Motion picture shot in Cromwell and nearby environs has its premiere

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Showtime : 7:45 pm
R
MOVIES

Movies are shot all over the country and all over the world. But it's not often that the cameras come to a quiet town like Cromwell.

That all changed with the production of "Pitching Tents," produced by Cromwell native David Gere in conjunction with Rob A. Fox, Jayme Petrille and Jane Kelly Kosek. Much of it was shot over the summer of 2015 at such places as Watrous Park, Cromwell Middle School, Willowbrook Plaza, the old Sav-Mor lot and various landmarks in nearby communities.

The coming-of-age film features both Hollywood actors and local talent. A red-carpet premiere took place at the Holiday Stadium Theater in Wallingford. Gere is producing partner at Woodhaven Media in Rhode Island.

The comedy is set in 1984 in a working-class town and focuses upon the future of a high school senior, the tug-of-war between his no-nonsense father and crackpot guidance counselor, and an encounter with a goddess who helps him uncover his true identity.

Gere was involved as both the producer and an actor. The film was directed by Jacob Cooney. Cromwell resident actor and magician Blaise Serra also appears and several other local people had small parts or served as extras.

"Pitching Tents" is now available on DVD through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Best Buy, Family Video and Redbox. It's also available on VOD and digital platforms including iTunes, GooglePlay, PlayStation, XBox, Vudu, Vubiquity and Amazon Prime.

According to the IMDb.com website, Gere's biological mother and sister died in a drowning accident when he was 6 months old. His father, James, an educator, then married Veronica Gere, who raised the young boy.

He fully considers Veronica his mother in all aspects of his life. She served for a time as principal of Edna C. Stevens School.

"She exposed me to the arts at a young age. My mother retired to raise me. My dad is better known in town than I am. He's a retired superintendent of schools," Gere said.

"My mother and I would spend hours together at the old Cromwell Library, exploring and learning together. I was so proud to tell her decades later that 'Pitching Tents' was shooting downtown, right near the very spot that we had so many fond memories together," he added.

He was an outstanding student and graduated from Cromwell High School in 1993 and then Providence College with a B.A. degree in political science and a minor in film studies.

"In high school, I was an athlete, played three sports, graduated at the top of my class," he recalled.

He began modeling and working on both sides of the camera in films and commercials. He soon began a run of short films, documentaries and music videos that were critically well received.

While in college, he developed a relationship with emerging Rhode Island directors Michael Corrente and Peter Farrelly and got his first acting break in "Outside Providence" (1999), a film which Peter and his brother Bobby Farrelly produced and Corrente directed.

In 2006, Gere appeared in Rocky Balboa, which he cites as a significant turning point. This film was directed by his childhood hero, Sylvester Stallone. In 2007, Gere appeared on the CW Network's hit show "Gossip Girl" as Frank Meltzer.

He is also an experienced stuntman and performed stunts in the Batman film "The Dark Knight" (2008) as one of Bane's Mercenaries. After working closely with professional wrestling legend Tommy Dreamer on the horror movie set of "Army of the Damned," he began performing as

the villainous manager DG Haven.

That character has a cult level following and is established in major promotions throughout North America. The wrestling connection has enabled him to become involved in numerous charitable activities.

He is active with several children's charities as well as the United Way.

Gere is currently continuing his acting career and is a producing partner for several major production companies including Woodhaven Productions and his own Connecticut-based Shadow Vale Productions. He used to own several nightlife venues in Connecticut, including the Shadow Room in Middletown, and is also an accomplished abstract painter.

Recent films he has been involved with as a producer include "Altitude," available on Redbox, and "The Opposite Sex" on Hulu. "Bleed For This" is available worldwide on all major retail and digital marketplaces; he was the casting producer for that movie.

He has produced four feature films in Cromwell. Initial scenes for "The Getter" were shot in town.

"Blue Line," as a crime thriller, was directed by Cooney and shot in Cromwell. It is scheduled for release by Lionsgate in 2018. The film stars Tom Sizemore, a tough-guy actor who had prominent roles in such films as "Saving Private Ryan, "Pearl Harbor" and "Black Hawk Down."

"I've had a wonderful experience coming to Cromwell for several productions. The community certainly has embraced the productions and the area offers diverse landscapes and resources that have enhanced the shoots," Sizemore said.

"David Gere is an exceptional producer who is deeply passionate about filmmaking. It is truly remarkable and exciting in terms of what he's

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David Gere and actress Chelsea Vale walk the red carpet at the Connecticut premiere of "Pitching Tents" at the Holiday Stadium Theater in Wallingford.
Photo courtesy of Sweeney Photography

brought back to his hometown. I can't wait to come back on a future film."

Another Gere film titled "House Rules" was also shot here and is due for release later this year. There will be local theatrical premieres for both this film and "Blue Line."

He credits the local police and fire departments with being extremely helpful in assisting with his productions.

Gere and his producing partner/girlfriend Chelsea Vale took time out of their busy schedules to talk with Cromwell LIFE. Vale is a Los Angeles-based actress who grew up in Colorado.

"I have a film with Ed Asner that is in post-production," Gere said.

It's called "The Santa Files" and is scheduled to be released in time for Christmas. Many of the scenes were shot in or around Providence.

"We shot part of 'Blue Line' at Cromwell High School," he added.

When Gere first went off to college, the plan was to become an attorney. That changed when he became exposed to the world of motion pictures.

"I didn't set out to be a filmmaker. I did not have any idea that I was going to end up in the entertainment business. When you start out, it's sort of like chasing the dream," he said.

First he just wanted to be an extra in one film. Then he wanted to find out how far he could go in the industry. He quickly learned that, while skill and creativity are important, fulfilling his cinematic dreams would require a great deal of hard work.

It was a while before he built enough of a reputation that he could convince actors and film crews to come to town to film scenes for various movies.

"Cromwell meant so much to me growing up. I'm advertising the town as a classic New England town," he said. "I invested in quite a few independent films starting out."

Now that he has a reputation in the business he is able to get studio and private equity firms to invest in his cinematic efforts. He has been a member of the Screen Actors Guild since 1997.

"I worked with the Town Council, the Board of Education, the mayor's office, the superintendent's office" to gain the use of the middle school, parks and other local venues for scenes from "Pitching Tents."

Other scenes were shot at an abandoned former grocery store and Willowbrook Plaza. He also used Willowbrook Spirit Shop both for scenes and as a storage site for his equipment.

Gere was profuse in his gratitude to shop owners Jay Polke and Chris Cambareri for their friendship

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and assistance. He also spoke highly of Mayor Enzo Faienza for his cooperation.

When he brings a brings a film to town he likes to support local businesses and incorporate local people, including students with an interest in film. Actors and crews stay at the Radisson Hotel and Quality Inn and food is ordered from such places as Mitchell's and Zerio's.

"The Cromwell Merchants Association has been great to me," he said. "The real goal is to bring larger and larger movie productions here."

His next film is called "Day for Night." Gere described it a psychological thriller that will also be shot in Cromwell.

He has appeared with such major Hollywood stars as Leonardo DiCaprio (Revolutionary Road), Sylvester Stallone (Rocky Balboa), John Travolta (Old Dogs), Christian Bale (The Dark Knight Rises) and Tom Cruise (War of the Worlds).

Blue Line Official Poster
Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

David Gere is a motion picture actor and producer who grew up and still lives in Cromwell.
Photo by Ryan Sweeney

"I am living the dream version of my life," Gere said. "Early in my career I had an agent out of New York and I got a lot of small roles in films."

His father is delighted with his son's success.

"He's doing very well. He developed an early interest in film studies," James said. "He was always interested in art, does quite a lot of painting. I'm pleased with the progress David has made."

Tommy DeNucci is the president, writer, producer and director of Woodhaven Media. He also had words of praise for his producing partner.

"David is a very hard-working filmmaker who likes to add a lot of nostalgia to his films. He's fun to work with," DeNucci said. "We both share a love for pro wrestling."

He also called Gere a passionate professional and a close friend who is much more than a co-worker. DeNucci said he enjoys shooting movies in town because Cromwell has all kinds of interesting places that work well for specific scenes. **CL**

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Ann C. Hale retires after 31 years with Cromwell Youth Services

Ann C. Hale shows off her light-hearted side at the Bushnell Park carousel in Hartford on an outing with the Cromwell Youth Services toddler play group.

"You have to accept people as they are and not be judgmental, because you never know what's going on. I tried to do that."

– Ann C. Hale

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Ann C. Hale originally tried to retire as administrator of Cromwell Youth Services in 2008, but that didn't work out. This time, after 31 years of service, she's fairly certain her retirement, which was effective June 30 after serving 31 years, will stick.

Hale's career started at Caesar Rodney High School in Dover, Del., where from 1962-1964 she taught physical education and health, coached basketball and field hockey, and also played guard on the Carl King Oilers women's basketball team.

She returned to her native Connecticut in 1964 – she grew up in Portland – to teach and coach, first at East Lyme Junior High School and then at Mercy High School in Middletown before leaving teaching to raise her family of four boys.

Even before she officially became involved with youth services, she was known for her sympathetic ear.

"Kids would come to me and they would talk to me and I would try to help them, point them in the right direction," she said.

"When I got out of teaching, I still did recreation for the town of Portland, so I still had contact with kids. And, of course, I was raising four of my own at the time, and they would bring their friends home, especially on Friday nights, which was hot dog night and mac and cheese. They said I made the best mac and cheese."

She also helped form a drug and alcohol task force in Portland.

"Unfortunately, it was too early; this was in the '70s. I kept hearing when I was doing gymnastics kids were talking about how they couldn't go to the bathroom because of the drugs and it bothered me," she recalled.

She went back to school, attending the University of Connecticut, and became a certified alcohol and drug counselor. She first worked part time at Portland Youth Services, moving into the director's role when it became available.

"Being in Portland and doing that work, I'd go to the grocery store and there'd be someone backing me in the corner. It was hard for my boys," she said.

When the opportunity arose in Cromwell, she was ready for the move. Her first day with Cromwell Youth Services was May 1, 1986.

"We were so small. We were just a little department. I used to say the dog warden had more money than I did," she joked.

Hale started numerous programs, some of which continue to this day, including the Santa's Workshop Christmas program.

"I started that right away when I came. That has grown. When I first did it, we were upstairs in the senior center. We had maybe 40 kids and families. Now we're up to over 100, 150 that are eligible," she said.

"Now the high school student council, they earn money. The money they donate to me goes to

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buy the toys for the children. They raised $1,300 this year."

Representatives from the student council help Hale shop for gifts for children ranging from infants to age 12.

"Then they put on a party at the high school for the whole family. They have pizza and salad and coffee and soda and of course cookies. The kids make enough cookies that every family goes home with a plate of them. These kids are fantastic."

There's a magician and Santa makes an appearance each year.

She also started a "lunch bunch" at Edna C. Stevens and Cromwell Middle schools.

"I'd go and I'd have lunch with the kids. They'd bring their trays and sit down and we'd talk. But then I thought, 'That's not really working.' So I got the idea that I'd show a movie with some kind of message. I loved 'Finding Nemo,' because he didn't listen," Hale said.

"It was amazing how they'd talk because they were thinking of the character and not thinking of themselves. I like to think I helped them."

She hosted after-school knitting and crocheting classes at Woodside Intermediate School for third, fourth and fifth-graders.

"They talk while they're doing stuff, so it's a good outlet for them. They're comfortable in talking. It wasn't just the idea of learning how to knit and how to crochet. It was an outlet to talk if they wanted to. Also, you pick up what's going on," she said with a chuckle.

Some programs were just run a few times when she could get grant money, such as an eight-week program with Manes & Motion Therapeutic Riding Center, and a seven-week program for teenaged girls that included sessions about mental health and nutrition, as well as fashion, make-up and hair.

"At the end we took them to a restaurant. They got dressed up and fixed their hair. You could see the difference in these girls from day one. It was such an expensive program," she said.

Baby-sitter safety is always popular as is the Kelly's Kids program that brings a variety of animals such as sheep, goats, pigs, ducks and rabbits to town.

Ann C. Hale, front, retired in June as administrator of Cromwell Youth Services. She's pictured with Program Assistant Marcia Pendleton-Sacco, who worked with her for 20 years.

Courtesy photo

But not all of her programs are designed for the youth themselves. One program, started 19 years ago, is for grandparents (or other relatives) who are raising children. The current group has eight grandparents and 13 children.

"One lady is raising five. They

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come with their problems. We help with the legalities of guardianship. Through the year almost all the offices are here, the tax collectors, senior resources," she said.

"We sent them to a conference in Plainville for grandparents raising grandchildren. They're also a support group. They help one another more than I help them; they've been through it," she added.

Another program, Hire Our Youth (HOY), has benefits across the community. It serves as a job bank for young people, matching them to community members who need assistance with yard work, baby-sitting, painting and other tasks.

Hale has won numerous awards including the Connecticut Youth Service Association Administrator of the Year, CYSA Board Member of Year, CYSA Youth Program Award for Cromwell's Great Strides Therapeutic Horseback Program and the Cromwell Grange Community Award. Program Assistant Marcia Pendleton-Sacco has been by her side for 20 years.

"From a generation less open-minded and more judgmental, she is a woman ahead of her time. Accepting of differences, respectful of individuality, intrigued and curious, anxious to learn current social trends, a lifetime learner, young at heart, a survivor," she said of Hale.

"Yet under the confident exterior lay insecurities camouflaged by years of training. A charming innocence. Life threw her many challenges. Each challenge became a growth experience. Life experience and knowledge gained through living life can be humbling. It can also be rewarding," she added.

"You can have a lot of life experiences but fail to learn from them and better yourself as an individual. It comes down to what you have learned and what you do with what you have. Credit must be given for the desire to serve humanity. Wisdom gained in life can help others," Pendleton-Sacco said.

"If you live your life as per your principles, your actions will speak for themself. Ann is considered wise, capable and worthy of respect. For the last 31 years, Ann C. Hale has always been approachable as an advocate and support system. One child, one person, one family at a time."

Hale calls Pendleton-Sacco her Rottweiler.

"She always protected me," she said. "I'm going to miss the people, my workers, my clients. I worry about them and want to be sure they're taken care of."

Hale is hoping to do volunteer work in retirement, travel including to see her oldest son, who's retired from the Army and lives in Washington state, and spend time with her five grandchildren. She's seen a lot of changes in her three decades in town.

"I think marijuana has grown a lot and changed a lot. What we try to get across is it's not pure anymore. You're really taking a chance. And coke is around; it is in every town. We're trying to get the information out as early as we can," she said.

Technology is another area that has changed rapidly and she holds school assemblies on topics such as proper cell phone use. Some issues never change, such as dealing with children whose parents are getting divorced.

"I try to sit and listen and help them in any way. I love my job. If a kid got in trouble, I'd go to court with him as an advocate," Hale said.

"I got to know my way around. It's very intimidating. I also attended a lot of PPTs [parent placement team] with parents to listen and be a support and an advocate for the kids."

She enjoyed the variety of her job.

"Some days I'm going to court, some days I'm with DCF, some days I'm at a PPT. There's never time for boredom," she said.

She credits her sense of humor with helping her through tough days.

"You have to be able to laugh. There are days when it's pretty gloomy. You could get a call in the morning and it could take you all day to help the situation out or you ended up in the ER with a kid and be sitting there all day or night," she recalled.

"You have to accept people as they are and not be judgmental, because you never know what's going on. I tried to do that. I tried to treat everybody the same. I tried to make their lives a little better." **CL**

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Gabe, a 3-year-old black Labrador retriever, is now a fully integrated member of the Marron family including mother Jeannine, 8-year-old Chloe and 10-year-old Ethan. Gabe is a service dog trained to work with children on the autism spectrum, and since his arrival in late February, Marron said she has seen vast improvement in her son's abilities.

Boy's best friend

Service dog for child with autism proves to be a life-changing pal

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Getting a dog can be a challenging and exciting experience for any family, but for Jeannine Marron and her children Ethan and Chloe, the process had far greater consequences.

Gabe, the 3-year-old black Labrador retriever who now lives with the family, is a service dog trained to work with children like Ethan, 10, who are on the autism spectrum.

"Back in the early summer or late spring of 2015, I heard about this organization called Heeling Autism," Marron said.

The organization, a subset of the larger Guiding Eyes for the Blind, trained dogs to work with the unique needs of children with autism and offered to place dogs with qualified recipients for free. These types of programs can often cost families between $13,000 and $20,000.

"The fact that this was free was appealing to me. I'm a single mom," Marron said. "Once I'd read about it, I contacted them and they sent me the lengthy application."

In addition to requiring the family's basic information, the application also asked for Ethan's medical records, school reports and letters of support from someone in the community. Marron discovered that filling out all of this information felt familiar.

"I fill out a lot of grant applications for him," she said. "I'm always looking to find the best services that can be used to help him."

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Ethan Marron, who is on the autism spectrum, takes responsibility for his service dog, Gabe, when they are out together.

As she was in the process of assembling the many pieces of the application, she was contacted by a representative at Heeling Autism and was told that the waiting list for a dog was so long that the organization would soon be placing a cap on the list. Once her application was in, the next step was to simply wait.

"It was six or seven months later that they came for the initial interview," Marron recalled. "We were notified after that that we had passed and that it would be about a two-year waiting time. In looking at other service dog programs, two to three years was standard."

As Marron and Ethan continued to wait, the family learned some unsettling news. Guiding Eyes for the Blind made the decision roughly a year ago to end the Heeling Autism program and focus on its primary mission to supply dogs for the vision impaired.

"There was a lot of community uproar," Marron said. "At that point I just wanted to know where does that leave us?"

After inquiring with the organization, she learned that it would be finishing out everyone who was on the waiting list before ending the program. She was contacted again this past December to continue the process.

"We had our second interview on Jan. 30," she said. "They bring a couple dogs out to see how Ethan interacts with them. It was only a few more weeks after that that it all came together."

At the end of February, Marron went to New York to attend training and returned home with Gabe. Although the dog's primary role is to help Ethan, younger sister Chloe, 8, who has always wanted a dog, was also thrilled.

"We didn't tell her about Gabe beforehand so she didn't know," Marron said with a smile.

As a service dog for a child with autism, Gabe serves in ways that are dissimilar to service dogs for people who are vision impaired.

"Children with autism, some but not all, have a tendency to bolt," Marron explained. "It can be as quick as at the grocery store reaching for a box of cereal and he's gone."

Gabe is trained to wear a special harness that not only has a soft, U-shaped handle for Ethan to hold but also tethers Ethan to the dog through a belt around his waist.

"If the child tries to run off, the dog is trained to anchor," Marron said.

For some children with autism, sleeping through the night can also be difficult. Some may have a tendency to get up at night and wander, sometimes leaving the house.

Service dogs like Gabe can be trained to sleep on top of the child, providing a calming weight as well as ensuring that the child stays in his or her room. Marron and Ethan are currently in the process of training Gabe for this task.

In addition to the physical services the dog can provide, Marron added the emotional benefits are also apparent.

"Scientific studies have shown that companion animals can increase emotional stability," she said.

In the time since Gabe arrived, she has seen a change in her son.

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"His attitude toward Gabe has been just as I expected, which is no big deal," she said. "But then there are those random moments where he goes and puts his head against Gabe's head or scratches his ears, and that surprises me."

Marron said that often in interactions with other people, Ethan will 'script,' meaning he speaks in dialogue from television shows and movies.

"Since Gabe, there's been a lot more original dialogue," she said. "There are longer sentences and longer interactions."

Ethan has quickly assumed responsibility for Gabe and she has witnessed him actively looking out for Gabe and asking about his well-being.

"If we do bring Gabe somewhere, he's right there holding onto the harness," Marron said.

On one recent trip, the family traveled with Gabe to a pet store to find something for the dog, but they left empty handed.

"We left the store without getting anything and Ethan said, should we go to another store?" Marron recalled with a smile. "That was huge for him."

Marron is able to see Ethan's interactions with Gabe every day, but she is not the only one who has observed a change in his behavior.

"It was probably two weeks into him having the dog, I noticed he was calmer at school. If he did start to get a little agitated or whatever, we were able to bring him down much quicker," Jane Foley said.

She is a special education teacher at Woodside Intermediate School. In the short time she had with Ethan before the start of summer, she had already started to see changes in his speech and language.

"He didn't have the dog all that long while we were in school, but he did talk about him all the time, so I noticed a definite increase in his language," she said. "By the end of the school year in June he was using sentences to tell me things he did with Gabe."

As a service dog, Gabe would be allowed to join Ethan in his classes at Woodside; for now, Marron is keeping the dog home or with her during the day.

"At this point, I don't think Ethan is ready for that, but I'm not ruling that out in the future," she said.

Gabe may not be a daily fixture in the school environment, but Marron said the faculty, staff and administration in the Cromwell Public Schools has been an active part of making the dog a possibility. She initially approached the teachers and staff simply to let them know what would be happening, but she soon found a multitude of people reaching out with resources and positive affirmations.

"Ethan just finished fourth grade so literally I had ideas and suggestions coming from his preschool teachers through fourth grade," Marron said. "I've had very good relationships with Ethan's teachers through the years."

"His mom is the most supportive mom I've had in ages. She does everything for this kid," Foley said. "Jeannine is wonderful."

Gabe visited the school to meet the other students. Foley said she has started to see a change in many of Ethan's peers as well.

"After the dog came in, kids I think looked at Ethan a little bit differently and I think they were a little more receptive to him. I noticed that Ethan's classmates asked pretty intelligent questions and to me it was extremely beneficial," she said.

"I've taught for over 30 years and he's definitely one of the coolest kids I've ever taught. I'm looking forward to seeing him in a couple of weeks when school starts to see if there's even more of an increase in his language."

Marron is grateful to all who have supported her son as he adjusts to life with a service dog, including those who have helped him with his physical therapy, those who wrote letters of support and everyone at Woodside who offered encouragement.

"I know Gabe is our dog, but this really felt like a full community effort," she said. "I really feel like he's life changing." **CL**

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The Cromwell Farmers Market has plenty of room to grow in Frisbee Park along River Road.

Freshly picked

Cromwell Farmers Market develops a following along the riverfront

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Fresh air, fresh produce, friendly faces and live music in a picturesque setting. Those are among the attractions every Friday afternoon at the Cromwell Farmers Market.

More and more people are attending the weekly attraction to shop for fresh food and more. It's held in Frisbee Park at 1 River Road, right along the banks of the Connecticut River. Stand on the bank and one has a clear view of the two bridges that span the river in nearby Middletown.

Parking is at a premium and teenage volunteers assist with that. The market is completely run by volunteers and more are always welcome. Shoppers are welcome to bring their dogs as long as the animals are well behaved and on a leash.

Operating hours are 4-7 p.m. The market opened June 2 and will continue through Sept. 29. It takes place rain or shine. A registered nonprofit organization, it is dedicated to promoting a sense of community while also supporting Connecticut farmers and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Because the market is a private entity it has to pay its own way. It receives use of the park, but no tax dollars, from local government. The local health district conducts inspections to make sure that all of the food items being sold are safe for human consumption.

Jeff and Heather Polke serve as the market masters. Heather spoke about how well it has been embraced by residents not only of Cromwell but also a wider group of surrounding communities.

"This is our third year. I just like supporting local and it's half the price of the grocery store. Everything was picked today," she said. "Everything [money] that is generated here goes back into the market. Our first year we had 28 vendors."

More than 40 vendors now make the Cromwell market one of their weekly destinations. Some are local, others are scattered around Connecticut, and at least one travels here from out of state.

"We have live music every week, we have food trucks every week," Polke said. "It's on, rain or shine, unless the town closes the park."

"It's at a nice, convenient time at the end of the week. It's family friendly," said Christine Whitney of Phoenix Farm, located half a mile away. "It's right on the Connecticut River and we get to see eagles fly by."

One recent Friday found a wide variety of food and other items for sale including beefalo (cross-bred beef and buffalo meat), sea salts, paella cooked on site, doughnuts, air-roasted coffee, hot sauces, French pastries, empañadas, pizza, natural body products, eggs, jams and jellies, zucchini noodles, cheeses, goat milk soap, Italian ice, tea, pies, nuts, pet treats, kettle corn, biscotti and, of course, plenty of farm-fresh produce.

They like to offer theme days to make things fresh each week. Recent topics have included young entrepreneurs, pickle tasting and pet day. Shoppers tell the organizers that they are saddened when the market shuts down for the winter and can't wait for it to reopen the following spring.

"When the winter months come people go through withdrawal," Polke said.

Market organizers are looking to expand their scope by working to create a children's community garden. It will be located on the grounds of Woodside Intermediate School on Geer Street near the bus entrance. **CL**

Learn more at cromwellfarmersmarket.org or check out its Facebook page.

Amanda Breault displays the hot sauces being sold by Sam & Oliver. She is the company's regional spice manager.

Krista Langevin, right, and her mother Patti were selling baked goods at her booth, Handfuls Petite Patisserie.

Gale Gardiner performed live music one recent Friday on her autoharp.

Richard Donohue and Maria Van Geystelen came dressed in historic attire to promote the Cromwell Historical Society.

Christine Whitney of Phoenix Farm in Cromwell was on hand selling organic produce.

Photos by Mark Jahne

News roundup

Parties name candidates

The Democrat and Republican parties have selected their candidates for the Nov. 7 municipal election. The tickets start with incumbent Republican Mayor Enzo Faienza seeking another term. His challenger is Kenneth Smith.

Republicans seeking seats on the Town Council are Frank Emanuele Jr., Richard Newton, Allan Spotts and Samantha Slade. Running on the Democratic ticket are Richard Waters, James Demetriades, Myron Johnson and Allan Waters.

Michael Camilleri, Lindsey Merli, Celina Kelleher and Jeffrey Matrullo are Republican candidates for the Board of Education. Running as Democrats are Paul Sousa, Stephen Palmer, Shirley Banic, Marilyn Teitelbaum and Laurie Cantwell.

Each party is running two candidates for the Board of Finance. They are Republicans Steve Wygonowski and Amanda Drew and Democrats Edwin Maley Jr. and Joseph Corlis.

Voters will also be asked to select people to serve on the Planning & Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Assessment Appeals and tax collector.

There is also a referendum on the ballot that will ask voters whether or not they approve of specific changes to the town charter. Cromwell LIFE will run profiles of the candidates for Town Council, Board of Education and Board of Finance in its election issue scheduled for publication Oct. 27.

Officials visit Carey Manufacturing

State Rep. Christie Carpino and Mayor Enzo Faienza recently toured Carey Manufacturing in Cromwell. The company's 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility produces catches, latches and handles for military, aerospace, computer, automotive and consumer applications.

They were provided with an overview of the company's corporate structure, product line and operational logistics. A highlight of the tour was gaining an understanding of Carey's commitment to restoring its manufacturing from China back to Connecticut.

Paul Lavoie, center in photo, hosted the visit. He spoke of the need for creating public policy that helps create high-paying manufacturing jobs.

Finances and peace go together

The First Congregational Church in Cromwell will host a Financial Peace University Class for nine weeks this fall. It begins Sept. 10 and continues through Nov. 12. Class will meet from 6-8 p.m.

Participation is open to the general public and the cost of materials is $100. This is a video series taught by Dave Ramsey. Register at daveramsey.com/fpu/classes/1044385 or by sending a check to First Congregational Church, P.O. Box 156, Cromwell, CT 06416.

Ramsey will teach practical ways to pay off debt, overcome the fear of budgeting and create a savings plan to replace retirement worries with financial peace. For more information call the church at 860-635-4806. **CL**

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Live on stage

The curtain opens to reveal Cromwell Community Theater

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Courtesy photo

The Cromwell Community Theater staged a Broadway Cabaret to raise both recognition and funds.

Wendy Wilkins loves live theater. So do many other people in town.

Those who enjoy attending a play or musical can attend the various shows put on each year in the middle and high schools. But there was nothing else available to the community prior to now that would not only offer live entertainment, but also allow people of all ages to participate as performers or off-stage crew.

Wilkins, her close friend Julie Braun and others are working hard to change that. They are among the residents who created Cromwell Community Theater, a venture that shows promise even while in its early stages.

CCT presented a Broadway Cabaret the evening of Aug. 5 in the high school auditorium. Performers and crew ranged in age from teenagers to adults in their 50s and 60s.

"I'm the producer of the show," Wilkins said during rehearsal a few days prior to the performance. "I love theater; I love going to the theater."

An insurance professional, she is the president of the Cromwell High School Music Boosters. She's also a member of another relatively new organization, the Cromwell Arts Alliance, which supports the theater group.

"The idea for doing this came from some of the Cromwell Arts Alliance meetings and people in town," Wilkins said.

The original plan this summer was to present a full musical but, as a relatively unknown group, CCT was not able to attract enough performers to make it work. So it settled on the cabaret instead. The ensem-

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FALL Arts

ble did a variety show in summer 2016 in partnership with Covenant Village of Cromwell.

Wilkins has no interest in appearing on stage but is more than willing to fill another important role as someone who takes care of the business side of things. She said the plan is to create a board of directors in the fall and file for status as a nonprofit organization.

"We want to really make sure we can pull this together," she said. "We will use this event [cabaret] as a fundraiser. We're going to start with musicals because they draw more people."

Wilkins and Braun have worked together on theatrical productions in the past. The latter was all over the auditorium at this rehearsal like the Energizer Bunny, instructing, advising, solving problems and making sure all the performers understood the details of their roles.

"She is the creative aspect," Wilkins said. "We have a lot of talent in town."

That recent cabaret roster involved approximately 50 percent Cromwell residents. The others came from a variety of central Connecticut towns.

Wilkins said the community theater will be careful not to do anything that conflicts with school musicals and dramatic productions. It is working closely with Company 'N Tempo, a local business.

"They've been doing a great job," she said. "Our plan is to start small and then do one big show a year."

"I have been involved in plays in the schools," Braun said.

A past performer, she particularly enjoys directing and helping actors discover the best way to develop and portray their characters. She remembers directors from her past who helped her succeed.

She has knowledge and experience with all the different aspects of staging a show and believes that makes her more effective as a director.

"The first time I was on stage was when I was 16," she said. "My brain is always swirling with all these creative ideas."

Braun has worked behind the scenes in several shows at the high school and, like Wilkins, is a member of the arts alliance. She acknowledged that getting a new theater company off the ground is a lot of work but she relishes the challenge.

"I love it. There is something inherently magical" about live theater, she said. "Cromwell Community Theater is on its way."

She loves going to the theater and getting lost in a show. When the audience laughs, smiles, or cries, that's the sign of an excellent performance.

"I'm a musical person inherently," Braun added.

Matthew Chiu served as music director for the cabaret. He worked with Wilkins on last year's talent show and has experience as an organist and director. He enjoys working with singers.

He also serves as the assistant director of the Odd Fellows Playhouse in Middletown. Chiu is studying toward a master's degree in music theory at Boston University.

"The chance to work with some of these singers is great," he said. "I like seeing all these faces that I wouldn't know and the wide variety of talent. I take pride in myself and the singers."

Chiu joked that he has a reputation for holding the singers over well past the scheduled quitting time for rehearsals. But it's all about helping them reach their highest levels of performance.

Melissa Pelletier of Wethersfield sang the signature tune from "All That Jazz" at the cabaret. She was thrilled to be a part of the new theatrical ensemble.

"I've studied theater and music since I was 17 or 18," she said. "It's been a while, but it's nice to be back."

Pelletier studied in Boston and Washington, D.C. Her past theatrical credits include "The Women" with the Connecticut Theater Company. **CL**

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Tough transitions

How to handle the new faces and places that make going back to school overwhelming

by Alicia B. Smith, Mara Dresner and Allie Rivera
LIFE Staff

School years are filled with numerous transitions for students and parents alike. Each fall brings new opportunities for learning, new challenges, new classmates, new teachers and increased responsibilities. Navigating these changes can be challenging, but area experts also have tips for smoothly sailing on to each new horizon.

Middle school to high school

"Ninth grade is a tough transition," Mario Almeida, principal of Rocky Hill High School, said. "For most kids, it's a brand new building so it's important to start off on the right foot."

In many districts, the shift from a middle school setting to high school can be a particularly difficult transition due in large part to extended freedom and responsibility.

"Middle school students, at least in Rocky Hill, are on a team, so they don't really leave the confines of that team," Almeida said. "At the high school you're travelling on your own. You're given a lot of freedom and you're also given a lot of room to make some mistakes."

Along with those additional responsibilities within the school building, students at the high school level are also responsible for their own academic progress, making time management an important skill to develop.

"You've got to put some time every night into some homework, and if you don't have homework, you have to study for that quiz or exam that's coming up," Almeida said. "Waiting until last minute to study for an exam is not going to fly at the high school."

Although students are given more responsibilities at this level, Almeida stressed that no student should feel they are tackling new challenges alone. There are a great deal of resources at the school for those who may feel they are struggling to adjust, either academically or socially, however students need to be proactive in seeking out help.

"Don't wait until you're failing to speak up," Almeida said. "Ask your teacher for help. When kids take the initiative to go see their teachers, the teachers are of course going to help."

Should students feel that going to their teacher isn't an option, Almeida stressed the importance of finding someone else in the school. "If you're struggling or having a hard time going to your teacher, at least go to your guidance counselor," he said. "They can at least be able to facilitate."

In addition to making strides academically, Almeida said that it is important for students to feel as though they are connected to their school by getting involved.

"My biggest advice that

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Back *to* School

I give to parents and kids is that the school has got so many clubs," he said.

"Get involved in some type of extracurricular. It doesn't just have to be sports. There's theater, marching band, chess club, Model U.N., there's so many things that they can get involved with."

By getting involved in school activities, students not only feel more connected to their school but also get the opportunity to meet others they may not have necessarily met in their classrooms.

"Academic achievement is improved when you're involved in extracurricular activities," Almeida said.

At Rocky Hill High School, as well as at many other schools throughout the state, incoming ninth-grader students have the opportunity to attend freshmen orientation.

"I think that's huge for them to attend," Almeida said. "They get to have a tour of the school and meet some of our upperclassmen. It's really a positive way to start off the year."

In West Hartford, Hall High School students are welcomed by Hall's Link Crew – part of a nationwide program that welcomes freshmen and makes them feel comfortable throughout their first year of high school.

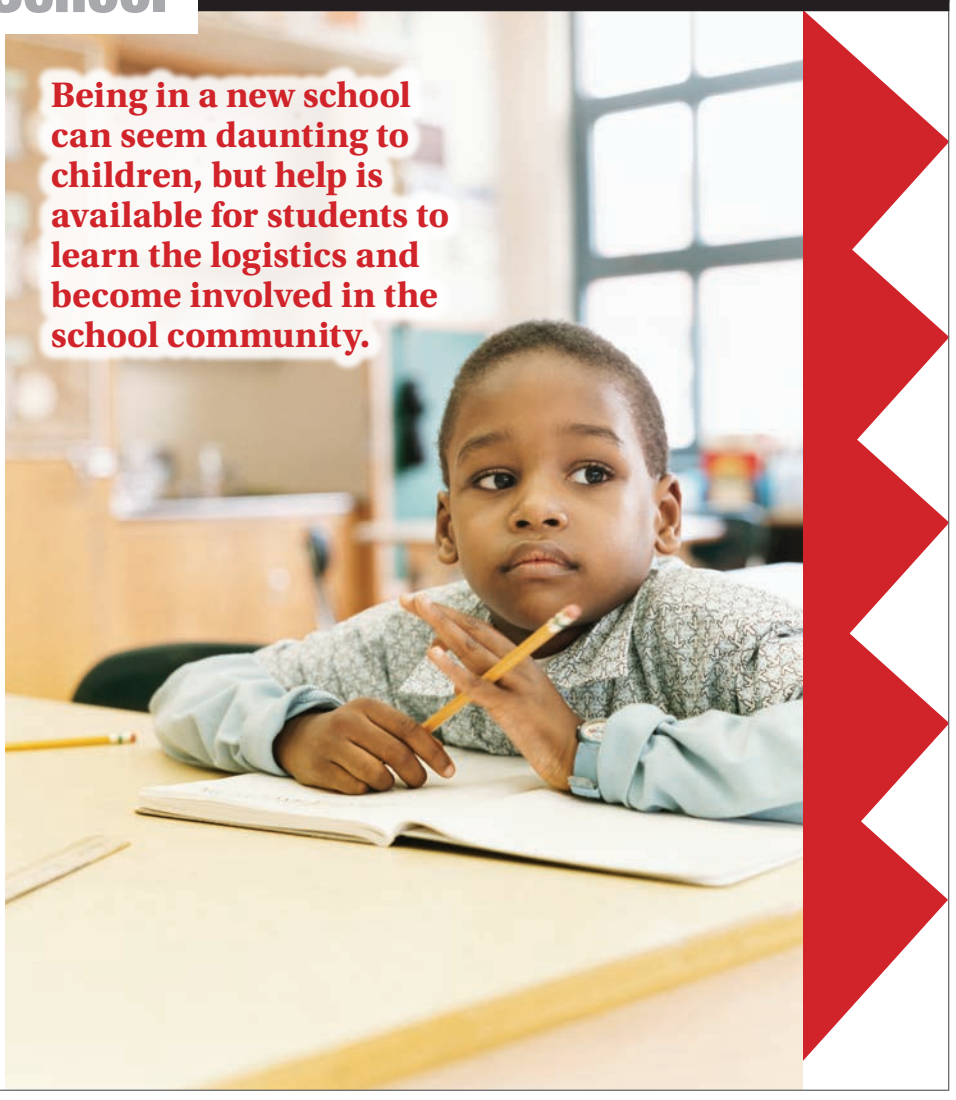
Students from junior and seniors classes are trained to be mentors and serve as positive role models, mentors and student leaders who guide the freshmen through what it takes to be successful in high school.

Public to private school

While most of the students at Westminster School in Simsbury are day students from the surrounding communities, they can expect some private school traditions that may be different from the environment at a public school.

One of the most startling changes students may have to adjust to, according to Jon Deveaux, dean of admissions and enrollment management at the school, is the class size.

"Smaller classes mean students need to come prepared, need to have done their homework and come ready to participate," Deveaux



Being in a new school can seem daunting to children, but help is available for students to learn the logistics and become involved in the school community.

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Back *to* School

said, adding that class size is typically about 12 students versus the 20 or 25 that is more common in public schools. "The expectation on each student is much higher. You have to come ready to participate."

In addition, the school has a strict dress code to which students are required to adhere.

At Kingswood Oxford, a private day school in West Hartford, students and their families are often familiar with the school as they likely attended campus events during the administrative process.

The school, however, offers a robust orientation program for all new students and their families.

"All new students are part of some type of program prior to the first day of school, which usually put those nerves at ease for them," Rebecca Benavides, senior associate director of admissions said. "Every student at our school has an advisor, which is a faculty member, and they have met that advisor before the first day of school, that person stays with them through the year."

The majority of students who attend the school are coming in from a public school.

Each new family that comes to K-O is introduced to a mentor family which will reach out to the new family before the start of school to help them with any questions they may have from things like what do I wear to what do I need to bring?

"I think they do an excellent job of making new families feel comfortable," Benavides said.

Transitions for parents

So, your child is settled at school or into his or her first apartment. Now what? One of the toughest transitions is often for parents when they become empty nesters.

"I think people have to be prepared for this. You have to figure things change when everybody leaves. Think of it as an opportunity more than a loss. You have to figure out what do to with more free time. You need to focus more on your marriage, your relationship with your friends; that takes conscious effort. It's very easy to feel disrupted with it, to feel upset," Geri Pearson, a nurse practitioner and associate professor, psychiatry, UConn School of Medicine, explained.

She's not just speaking from theory. Her youngest child – her children range in age from almost 33 to 20 – just moved out.

"You're left back with your spouse, back the way it started. You're missing all the noise. It's quieter; there's no question. I had to get used to it all. Groceries aren't as expensive. That's the thing that's really funny; groceries are half what they were," she said with a laugh.

Parents often start to see themselves in a different light.

"I think it brings your age into focus. When we have kids in the house, we still think we're young. When you don't have any kids in your house, you think, 'I'm moving into another phase in life,' which is OK," Pearson, said.

She said that most people will get past the empty nest period with a little time.

"If people end up feeling really disrupted and it lasts months and months, they need to get some counseling; they need to figure out why. Maybe the marriage isn't good, maybe for years and years, they used their kids as a block. You do hear about people whose kids leave the home and they get divorced," she said.

And while Pearson's own children live in Connecticut and they text every day, she admits it's not quite like having them home.

"I really miss my kids," she said. "The hardest for us is figuring out how much to cook! Life is simpler without all these people in the house but also a little lonely." **CL**

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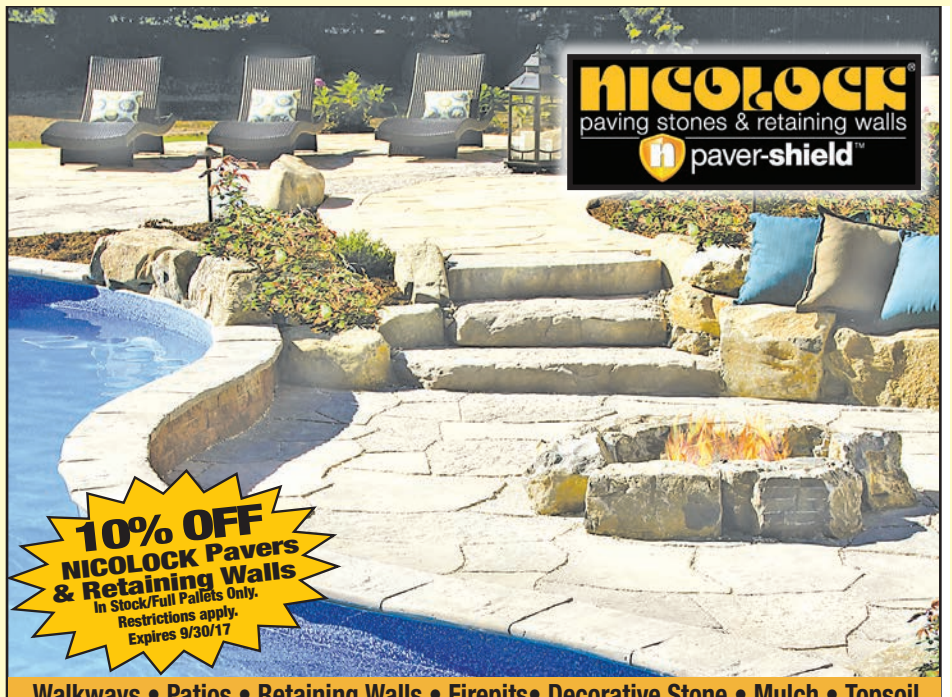

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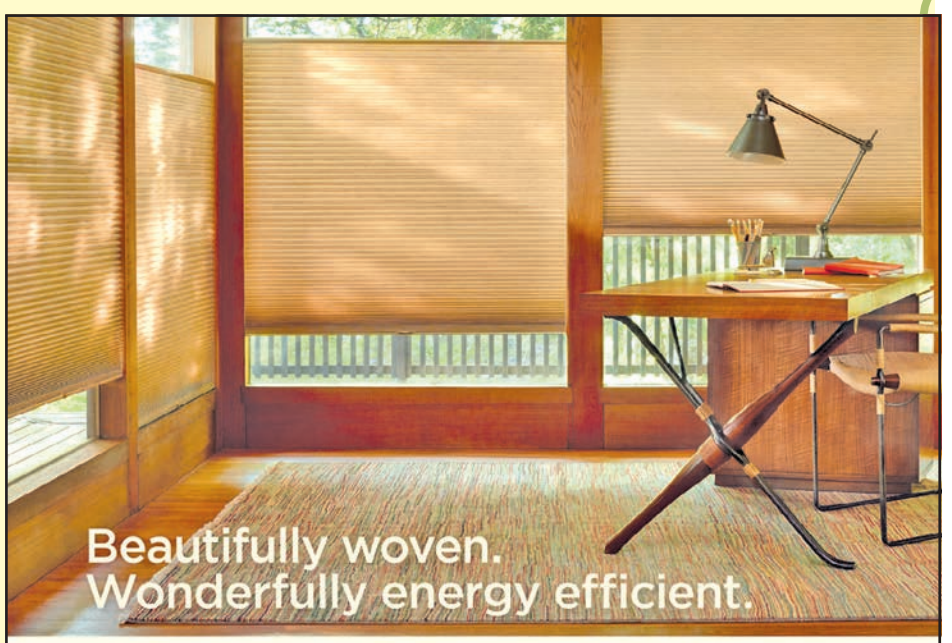

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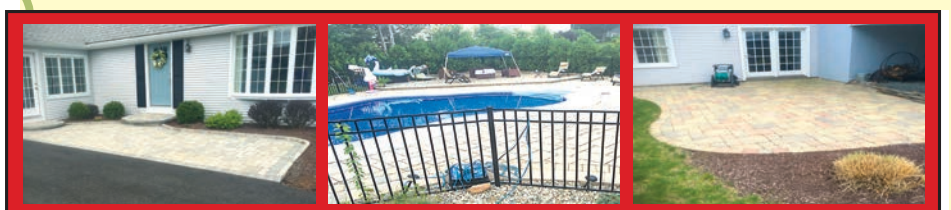

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Editorial

Hate has no place in America

The recent events in Charlottesville, Va., are a wake-up call to the rest of the United States of America. More than 240 years after the founding of this country and more than 150 years since the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, there are still people who foster hatred, racism and bigotry toward their fellow citizens.

That should come as no surprise. This country has always struggled with race relations and increasing racial, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. Recent years have added a growing number of different sexual orientations to that list.

Some people can deal with all of that better than others. Some embrace, some generally accept, some don't understand, some may even disagree. That's their right.

But they do not have the right to promote violence against people who do not look and think like them. America was founded as a country of immigrants and remains so today. Unless your body contains Native American blood, you or your ancestors came here from somewhere else.

Totalitarian states are simple in their design. Everyone is expected to walk, talk and behave in the same manner. To do otherwise, especially if it involves criticism of the government, is to risk ostracism, harassment or even imprisonment.

Freedom is a much better approach, but it comes with challenges. The First Amendment grants every American the right to free speech. We can say almost anything we want without fear of penalty, even if it is hurtful or offensive.

That is especially true when it comes to political speech, perhaps the most protected kind of expression. People should be able to praise or criticize their government and its elected and appointed officials. They should be allowed to advocate for change or maintaining the status quo and utilize passionate language in doing so.

But it crosses the line when that sacred American right is used to promote hate, bigotry and violence. That's not liberal speech or conservative speech. It's straight-out evil and should be regarded as such.

White supremacists, neo-Nazis, anti-Semites, The Ku Klux Klan and any other groups that espouse hate and intolerance need to be rejected and opposed by the good people of this country.

We may not be able to change their minds, but we can at least send the message that their views are not welcome in a free country that proclaims all of its citizens to be equal in the eyes of their creator and under the law.

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KEITH TURLEY, Publisher

EDITORIAL
Abigail Albair, Executive Editor
aalbair@turleyct.com
Mark Jahne, Editor
John Fitts, Assistant Editor
Alicia B. Smith, Associate Editor

STAFF WRITERS
Allie Rivera, Mara Dresner,
David Heuschkel, Sloan Brewster

ADVERTISING SALES
Alana DiMarco
alana@turleyct.com,
860-264-5723

PAGE DESIGNERS
Daniel Kornegay, Cynthia Martel,
Robert Sirois

GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT
Barbara Ouellette, Production Manager
ads@turleyct.com, 860-264-5523
Maureen LaBier, Production Assistant
Daniel Kornegay, Corley Fleming, Cynthia Martel,
Kathy Kokoszka, Mary Grimes

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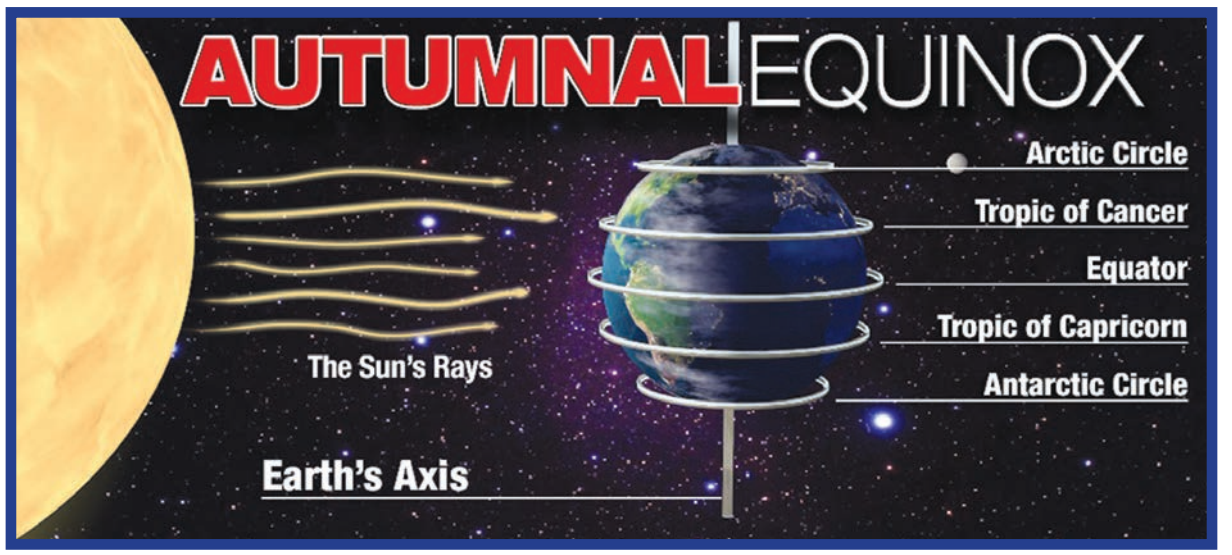

Goodbye summer, hello autumn!

This month we transition from Summer to Fall. Tough for those of you who may enjoy heat and humidity, but a welcome change for those who like cooler, shorter days. The Autumnal Equinox occurs this year on the 22nd of this month, at 4:02 pm.

Now the term "equinox" is Latin, referring to the days of the year when there is nearly equal day and equal night – when the Earth's axis is not tilting in either direction toward or away from the Sun (also occurring in March with the transition from winter to spring).

However, the exact timing is more of an approximate - on the 22nd we will actually have 12 hours and 10 minutes of possible daylight (sunrise 6:38 a.m., sunset 6:48 p.m.). Also, it is important to point out, with regard to sunrise/set, these times are relative to when the upper edge of the Sun crosses the horizon (not the center).

To go more in-depth, the equinox occurs when the Sun crosses the celestial equator, from north to south – when the Sun is at the halfway point, between summer and winter. Of course, this is relevant only to the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere, it would be the opposite; meaning, those south of the equator will be saying goodbye to winter and hello to spring. **CL**

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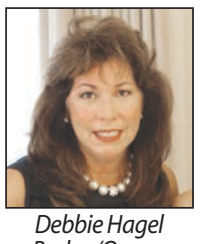

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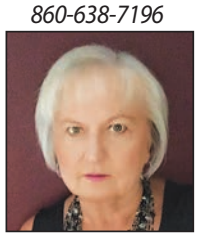

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SOLD 4 Lilac Court
SOLD 66 East Street
SOLD 481 Main Street
SOLD 85 Fairview Drive
SOLD 40 Great Hill Pond Road
SOLD 4 Hartfield Road
SOLD 405 Wall Street
SOLD 13 Myrtle Road
SOLD 44 Francis Avenue
SOLD 5 Countryside Lane
SOLD 5 Forest Road
SOLD 74 Forest Drive
SOLD 20 Carillon Drive
SOLD 1301 Briarwood Court
SOLD 2 Wightman Place
SOLD 18 Kinne Road
SOLD 46 Aresco Drive
SOLD 13 Tuccitto Road
SOLD 5 Countryside Lane
SOLD 110 Stony Corners Circle
SOLD 187 Woodland Drive
SOLD 108 High Street
SOLD 16 Pondview Drive
SOLD 23 Locust Circle
SOLD 7 Blackhaw Drive
SOLD 267 Thompson Hill Road
SOLD 6 Millennium Drive
SOLD 386 Main Street
SOLD 588 Butternut Street
SOLD 109 Wildwood Road
SOLD 142 Cow Hill Road
SOLD 15 Mountain Laurel Court
SOLD 9 Round Hill Road
SOLD 19 Coe Avenue
SOLD 7 Deming Lane
SOLD 79 Geer Street
SOLD 17 Vincy Drive

SOLD 207 Limner Circle
SOLD 309 East Street
SOLD 577 High Street
SOLD 68 Hickory Circle
SOLD 235 Hawks Nest Circle
SOLD 9 High Ridge Road
SOLD 22 Hubbard Street
SOLD 562 Main Street
SOLD 5 Blue Meadow Road
SOLD 140 Salem Drive
SOLD 4 Douglas Drive
SOLD 14 Bellaire Manor
SOLD 14 Willow Avenue
SOLD 3 Jewell Avenue
SOLD 3 Country Squire Drive
SOLD 16 Elm Road
SOLD 250 Margarite Rd Extension
SOLD 696 William Street Extension
SOLD 97 Nooks Hill Road
SOLD 18 Fairview Heights
SOLD 33 West Silver Street
SOLD 3 Newberry Street
SOLD 736 Westfield Street
SOLD 281 East Street
SOLD 1 Pheasant Run
SOLD 22 Butternut Knoll
SOLD 500 Church Street
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SOLD 2308 Cromwell Hills Drive
SOLD 10 Shadow Lane
SOLD 38 Elm Road
SOLD 656 Main Street
SOLD 94 Barbara Road
SOLD 45 Colonial Street
SOLD 372 Main Street
SOLD 90 Highmeadow Lane
SOLD 457 Killingworth Road
SOLD 110 Pinehurst Place

SOLD 82 East Ridge Road
SOLD 494 Wall Street
SOLD 195 Carriage Crossing Lane
SOLD 3 Dolores Road
SOLD 103 Harvest Woods Road
SOLD 11 High Ridge Road
SOLD 40 Winthrop Boulevard
SOLD 52 Deerfield Avenue
SOLD 67 Sunnyslope Drive
SOLD 17-19 Strickland Street
SOLD 0 Atkins Street
SOLD 98 Hunting Hill Avenue
SOLD 87 Union Street
SOLD 21 Raymond Place
SOLD 26 Wilcox Road
SOLD 501 Cortland Circle
SOLD 64 Cedar Terrace
SOLD 95 Court Street
SOLD 138 Higby Road
SOLD 19 Clover Street
SOLD 58 Wells Road
SOLD 9 Sequoia Drive
SOLD 118 Abbe Street
SOLD 55R North Road
SOLD 62 Webster Court
SOLD 95 Stillwold Drive
SOLD 10 Main Street, Unit 307
SOLD 85 North Main Street, Unit 47
SOLD 21 High Ridge Farm Lane
SOLD 101 Sharon Lane
SOLD 681 Norwich Avenue
SOLD 161 Cynthia Lane
SOLD 2 Glenview Drive
SOLD 4D Country Squire Drive
SOLD 21 High Ridge Farm Lane
SOLD 11 Garden Street
SOLD 140 Carriage Crossing Lane
SOLD 16 Raymond Place

SOLD 4 Goodrich Avenue
SOLD 53 Field Road
SOLD 51 Paul Spring Road
SOLD 33 Richard Road
SOLD 61 Cedar Street
SOLD 0 Round Hill Road
SOLD 24 Chapman Street
SOLD 56 Independence Way
SOLD 3 Coe Avenue
SOLD 18 Cross Street
SOLD 1 Bow Lane
SOLD 20 Greendale Avenue
SOLD 15 Clubhouse Drive
SOLD 1 Ronald Drive
SOLD 57 Timber Hill Road
SOLD 257 Ridgewood Drive
SOLD 17 Blakeslee Road
SOLD 65 Harrison Road
SOLD 311 Hanover Street
SOLD 18 Congress Drive
SOLD 5 Nordland Avenue
SOLD 18 Horse Run Hill Road
SOLD 3 East Lake Place
SOLD 4 Holly Hills Drive
SOLD 224 Basswood Drive
SOLD 196 Country Club Road
SOLD 132 Jobs Pond Road
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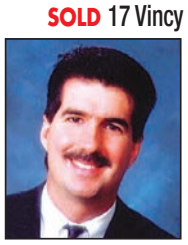

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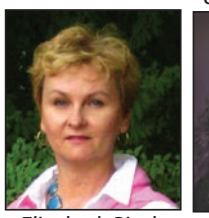

Elizabeth Piech
Polish/English Speaking
203-715-5884

Julie Fitts Ritter
860-614-5853

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